

Concerning Mistletoe

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Summary: Friendly requests around the holidays should always be avoided. At all costs.

Concerning Mistletoe

By most accounts the party had not gone well. Oh, there was the vast majority of the adults who thought it had all been an hysterical series of moments to laugh at the younger members of the village and the vast majority of the non-participating youths who took as an event to mock their unlucky fellowsâ€¦ all right, so by most accounts the party had gone quite well.

The minority of the accounts said otherwise. Really, when you found yourself sitting at a table covered in broken dishes and spilled mead with a strip of mutton pressed to your eye and wadded cloth at your nose while your girlfriend sat in a chair far across the room with her head in her hands while shaking and making muffled sob-like noises it was hard to appreciate the lovely nuances of annual festivities.

"Astrid, it's not what it looked like," Hiccup repeated once again.

No response from Astrid.

Though in retrospect, the incident had been exactly what it had looked like. Himself lying on the floor after reeling back from a punch to the face while a full-out brawl had spun like an especially violent storm into various samples of furniture and people while Snoggletog songs had been sung off-key in the background. Within a healthy minute after that the interior of Meade Hall had been in shambles and any kind-spirited holiday feelings had been replaced by the usual Viking madness.

That snippety little sprig of mistletoe still hung from its place. It

had managed to kill Baldur and its cruelty was still not satisfied.

And to think everyone had thought it funny.

Maybe it had been. Maybe it if had all happened to someone else it would have been the most jovial moment of the night.

But Hiccup was not up for pondering what-ifs. He knew only two things; that Astrid would probably never get over this, and he was going to kill Tuffnut.

The latter of which he knew he shouldn't do, morally speaking. After all, Hiccup was capable of saying no to any incident that did not sound quite right and he knew better to get involved in anything involving the Thorston twins. Even so, there was a spot of healthy Viking masculinity that demanded some sort of payback.

* * *

><p>It had all begun late that morning. A lovely morning with not too much blizzard-like conditions with the spirit of yet another Snoggletog celebration singing joyfully in the air. The sort of morning where no one would dream of anything going wrong. Hiccup had been up to nothing extraordinary, had set himself up fixing a few shovels at the forge, not expecting much more needing to be done.<p>

Perhaps the short exchange with Boilsput should have served as a warning.

Boilsput, from what Hiccup could gather from village girls, was the most eligible crush in Berk. A few years' older than Hiccup yet not quite considered grown-up, he rode the fine line between boyhood and manhood with as much grace as a barbarian could show. He was huge and muscular with teeth so straight it was almost unnatural. Even Astrid went a little googly when he was around even though she swore Hiccup was the only guy in her eyes. Hiccup was pretty sure he believed her and certainly had no argument with Boilsput.

Boilsput came into the forge that morning, whistling some old song before casting that straight-toothed smile at Hiccup. "Hi!" His smile lessened as he searched for a name. "Cough. Sneeze."

Hiccup smiled back at him with patience.

"I dunno. You. That dragon-training kid. Lots of good you did around here. Good job."

"It's Hiccup. And thanks."

Boilsput looked pleasantly pleased with himself.

Though it was common for men to come into the forge to superciliously surmise the wares Hiccup wasn't sure how to handle someone who didn't seem to be doing anything. "Anything I can do for you?" Hopefully nothing too crazy. Gobber had stepped out and every time he did that a request came in that was beyond Hiccup's skill.

Boilsput pulled a small dagger from his belt. "This got

chipped."

It certainly had. "And you want me to fix it?"

"That would be great."

"All right, shall do."

More silent staring.

"Should be done this afternoon?" Hiccup suggested.

"Sounds good!"

Hiccup gave a sigh of relief as Boilspurt walked away. The guy was incredibly dumb. Well, a chipped dagger blade was an easy enough thing to fix.

He was in the process of selecting the necessary tools when the next visitor arrived.

"Yo, Hiccup!" Tuffnut's voice rang out.

Hiccup returned a smile, gratefully confused the greeting so far did not contain one of Tuffnut's usual shoves or punches. "Oh, hey."

Rather than stand there like some guardian statue Tuffnut set to touching everything he could get his hands on. "So I saw that Boilspurt guy walking away from here."

"Yeah. Needed a knife fixed."

"I guess he's supposed to be a pretty cool guy."

Hiccup shrugged. "Yeah."

"Unfortunately, I don't think I can trust him." Tuff pulled away from touching things to lean cross-armed on the table.

"He seems trustworthyâ€|" Hiccup wasn't sure he liked the way Tuffnut looked at him. It was a look ofâ€|" demanding things.

"Yeah, I can trust him to forget anything. He's dumber than everyone says I am and apparently that's saying something. Not sure where anyone gets that idea."

Hiccup considered agreeing with him despite the meanness of the topic but was interrupted.

"Anyway, that's why I'm here. I need a favor because in a moment of stupidity I asked that guy to do something."

Hiccup felt a chill run down his spine. "And what kind of favor might that be?"

"Oh, it's simple. Way simple." Tuffnut pounded a palm down on the table and grinned wickedly. "I just need your help."

Just what he was afraid of. " With what?"

"Mistletoe."

Another chill ran down his spine. "Umâ€¦"

"Whoa! Not like that!" Tuff sprang away from the table, waving his hands wildly. "It's for my sister."

"You want me toâ€¦"

"It will make her year."

"You asked Boilspurt to kiss her?" Hiccup waved the dagger at the direction Boilspurt had gone. "First? And what did he say to that?"

"Oh, he said yes. Apparently there's plenty of Boilspurt to go around. But he's probably going to forget."

"I think Ruff would prefer him to meâ€¦"

"Never mind that. In the end she won't care. The whole idea is calming her down."

To Hiccup it all sounded like the least calm thing he had ever heard. "Calming her down?"

And Tuffnut was back to the table, shoving tools out of the way. "You have to help me. She's driving me nuts. Apparently she has it in her head that sometime this next year you're going to marry Astrid and then she'll be single andâ€¦"

"I'm not going to marry Astrid next year!" He wondered what Astrid would have to say about that. He also wondered if Astrid had been spreading this little rumor.

"I know, I know! But you know what they say. If a girl doesn't get kissed under the mistletoe she won't get married the next year."

"But it doesn't guarantee getting kissed will get her married."

Tuffnut took a moment to consider that logic. He finished by rolling his eyes. "I don't care. Either way. It will make her so happy and then she'll shut up about how she doesn't have a boyfriend and that will make me happy."

"What about when she starts talking about how she does have a boyfriend?"

"Look, are you going to help me out or what?"

"Is this acceptable guy behavior?"

"I'll owe you like two favors."

There seemed to be something a little more insidious about the situation but Hiccup couldn't put his finger on it. It was kind of nice to be considered possible for pleasing a girl. "But I do have a

girlfriend."

"Who trusts you." Tuffnut was smiling broadly now, with only the barest hint of desperation. "It's just a kiss."

"Wellâ€¦"

"It's tradition!"

"I don'tâ€¦"

"A kiss between friends. Nothing romantic."

Hiccup sighed. "Fine. I'll give her a peck on the cheek. Friendly only. And only if Boilspurt doesn't step in."

"Thank-you!" Tuffnut pounded the table hard enough to send all the tools jumping. "I so owe you for this!"

Already Hiccup felt future regret welling up.

Evening fell and the Snoggletog festivities swung into being. The night was perfectâ€”the storm had grown to the point that anyone unfortunate enough to be outside too long was thrown against the ground and the air was pure white with snow. Just the sort of night where you wanted to be inside with friends.

For Hiccup, not all was pleasant. Oh, for the most part it was. He was excited for the party and the fun and for a change to be seen with Astrid. But he had spent the day tossing around Tuffnut's request. He had barely been able to look at Boilspurt when he had arrived for his dagger. By the time hours had passed all had seemed well. He had justified any kiss to Ruffnut that would hopefully not happen would be nothing more than a friendly kiss on the cheek, that he was secure enough in his relationship with Astrid, and nothing more would be thought about it. Even so, apprehension was his other companion as he and Astrid entered Meade Hall.

"I am so excited about this!" Astrid was saying. She had been chattering about the party for quite a while now, if Hiccup remembered correctly. "I love this time of year and everything looks great and I plan on staying up all night!"

"Sure" and "Uhhuh" were his standard responses, and fortunately Astrid was caught up in her own delight that she didn't press him for more.

The Hall was filled past safe capacity. It was a celebration the way Vikings celebrated with less finery and niceties and more with random bellowing and drunken conversations. Pretty awesome, to be sure. A few decorations had been put up during more sober moments and the place looked as nice as one could expect it to look.

Except, of course, for that mistletoe.

Oh, gods.

He just had to hope that Boilspurt would be up to sharing his supposedly wonderful kisses. He was so caught up in that particular hope that he barely noticed as Astrid drug him under a

sprig.

"Look!" she declared with a glance up. "Mistletoe!"

He choked back a scream and failed to realize that he was supposed to kiss her. Yes, his beautiful, smart and wonderful girlfriend.

She just laughed and kissed him. Very nice. For that moment and the following his mind was off of Tuffnut's stupid plan.

"You know," Astrid said as she slid her hand into his, "they say a lot of things about mistletoe."

Oh, great. The stupid plan had returned to mind. "It killed Balder?"

Astrid rolled her eyes. "Whatever. The mistletoe was an innocent and unwilling accomplice."

"But it stilled killedâ€"

"I'm talking. If a girl doesn't get kissed under the mistletoe, she won't get married the next year." She looked at him with laughter and far too much adoration in her eyes.

Maybe she had started that rumor. Weren't they far too young to get married? Hiccup felt his face heating up. This was both exciting and terrifying. "But does getting kissed under the mistletoe guarantee she will get married?"

"Certainly doesn't hurt. Doesn't matter. I wound up kissing you."

This was one of those girls things, wasn't it? She was giving him a hint. All right, he could take one. He pulled her back under the mistletoe and pressed a kiss to her lips. Mm. This was what kissing should be.

For quite a while after that he was just fine. He was happy, he had a pretty girl with him, people were throwing friendly drunken gibberish at him. He almost forget entirely about Ruffnut.

Then, somehow the brightest thing in the room, Tuffnut stared at him.

Baldur's horrible death. That was the first thing that sprung to his mind. So Boilspurt had completely forgotten. He whirled around, searching for the older boy. He was at the party, all right. He was leaning against a table chatting with half a dozen older girls. No Ruffnut near him.

She was chatting with some other folksâ€| just a little distance away from mistletoe.

Tuffnut just stared warningly at him.

Hiccup swallowed. The action was painful. "Hey, Astrid. There's Ruff. Let's go over and talk."

"Okay," Astrid happily agreed.

Maybe it wasn't such a great idea bringing Astrid along. Ruff was a good friend, but surely Astrid wouldn't go all jealous. Girls were impossible to predict.

Time slowed as he walked toward Ruffnut. All the while he tried to convince himself that what he was doing was fine. He was helping a friend. Making Ruffnut feel appreciated. Participating in a social request.

"Hi, Ruffnut. Happy Snoggletog."

She didn't have time to respond before he tugged her by the arm until they were right underneath the mistletoe and kissed her quickly on the cheek.

She punched him. She punched him squarely between the left eye and the nose.

He lost balance at that point, falling back against Astrid in complete realization that he had known how dumb this was the entire time.

The entire Hall went silent.

"What were you doing, Hiccup?" Ruff screeched.

"Iâ€" His nose was beginning to bleed. Couldn't the girl appreciate a friendly kiss? Astrid helped him stand, but all he could see was a swirl of red and black. He didn't get any further than that.

"You were afraid Hiccup was going to kiss you?" Fishlegs' voice was the first to break the silence.

"No, I wasn't afraid Hiccup was goingâ€" "

"You asked for Fishlegs' help?" Snotlout's voice demanded. "You told me I was the only one!"

"You asked this guys to beat up someone? You enlisted help against Boilspurt?" Astrid asked.

"Who is coming right this way," said Fishlegs.

"Oh, gods," muttered Ruffnut. "When Tuff said he was going to get that idiot to kiss me I took him seriously. And apparently he got Hiccup here to make fun of the whole thing andâ€" "

"I highly doubt Hiccup was making of fun of you." Astrid. "Hiccup would never do such a thing. At least he better not." Her grip on his shoulder tightened.

"I think you broke his nose," Fishlegs commented.

"Yeah," muttered Hiccup. "Ruff, I'm sorry andâ€" " His vision cleared enough to see the arrival of Boilspurt on the scene, all bright eyed and friendly.

"Looks like there's a scuffle over here," he said. "Maybe I can fix that with a kiâ€" "

Snotlout pounded a fist into his palm, but didn't get a chance to do whatever attack Ruffnut had asked him to do. For at that moment two of Boilspurt's previous girls launched themselves at him in a rage, screaming something about him kissing other girls.

And somehow the entire village had managed to focus on them and the Snoggletog festivities at the same time.

Hiccup turned, still blurry-eyed, to Astrid.

She frowned at him. "Did you really just kiss Ruffnut?"

No point in trying to reply. He could think of nothing to say.

Somewhere nearby Tuffnut wailed in pain.

"You knew I thought Boilspurt was an idiot!" Ruff screamed.

"I thought it would be funny!"

"And Hiccup?"

"Just in case Boilspurt didn't kiss you! Not as funny but stillâ€œ" He gave another scream of pain.

The brawl had been reduced to two girls, with Boilspurt standing on the sidelines complaining how his dagger had chipped again.

After that it was more or less a blur. Lots of comments, lots of laughs, and lots of drunken singing, the lyrics a mix of Snoggletog and a saga depicting the night's events. Astrid sunk into a chair, head in her hands, and slowly the Hall emptied.

* * *

><p>"Astrid." It was beginning to sound pointless to say her name. "Can you just listen? Please? I can't stand it when girls cry."<p>

Slowly, her shoulder shaking, she pulled her hands away from her face. Tears stained cheeks.

It was worse than he had thought.

She was laughing. Silent but mirthful laughter, tears streaming from her eyes. All this time. She had been laughing at him.

"You should have seen your face!" she managed to gasp.

Hiccup closed his eyes. All right, so he now knew Astrid would never get over this. He was not happy at all with Tuffnut.

And he really hated mistletoe.

End
file.